



News release

Hurricane Rita update 13:00

22 September 2005

Weather models from the main forecasting centres around the world are giving authorities a better idea of where Hurricane Rita will make landfall in the next few days. Agencies and departments including the Met Office and [Foreign and Commonwealth Office](#) are working closely together to give the best advice for anyone affected by the approaching hurricane.



Hurricane Rita is now well into the Gulf of Mexico, and is positioned 500 miles south-east of Galveston. It has intensified in the last 24 hours to a category 5 hurricane. Sustained wind speeds are now estimated to be as high as 175 m.p.h. Predicted landfall is expected in an area stretching from just west of Galveston to western Louisiana and residents of this area are being warned accordingly. Extreme winds and flooding from storm surge, possibly up to six metres, and prolonged heavy rain inland are the main threats to life and property.

The 2005 tropical storm season for the Atlantic was predicted to be one of the most active, but this year could see a record number of storms. In early August, with the season already under way, Colorado State University issued a forecast for 20 tropical storms, 10 of which would reach hurricane level. So far there have been 17 tropical storms to date - Rita is the ninth hurricane.

Twenty-one storms were recorded in 1933 and the record number of hurricanes in one season is 12 in 1969. With the official end of the season at the end of November and the fact that some storms have occurred as late as early December, it seems likely that these records could be toppled this year. With only 21 names nominated for each storm season it also means that the National Hurricane Center (NHC) in Miami will need to resort to using letters of the Greek alphabet should the record be broken.

[Latest tropical cyclone advisories](#)

[Travel advice from Foreign and Commonwealth Office](#)

[More about tropical cyclones](#)

Notes:

Hurricane strength is defined on the Saffir-Simpson scale noted below:

- Category 1 sustained wind speeds of 74 to 95 m.p.h.
- Category 2 sustained wind speeds of 96 to 110 m.p.h.
- Category 3 sustained wind speeds of 111 to 130 m.p.h.
- Category 4 sustained wind speeds of 131 to 155 m.p.h.
- Category 5 sustained wind speeds greater than 155 m.p.h.

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